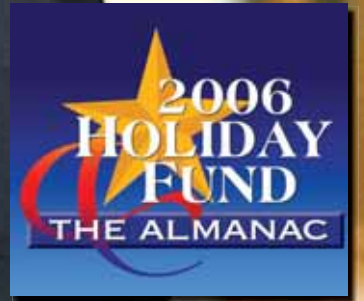


ATHERTON MAYOR says town still wants to talk
to school district it's suing over M-A theater. Page 5

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE



See Page 12

NOVEMBER 29, 2006

www.AlmanacNews.com | VOL. 42 NO. 13

ON TRIAL

*Elizabeth Gheleta has been found
'guilty of committing public service' for 38 years
of helping prisoners in county jails
with the Service League.*

[Page 14]

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT

Helping and healing

Margaret Allen, a physician assistant at the Belle Haven Clinic in Menlo Park, shares a laugh with her assistant, Martha Escobedo. The Belle Haven Clinic is a satellite site for the Ravenswood Family Health Center, one agency supported by reader donations to the Almanac's holiday fund. For more on the clinic and other Holiday Fund beneficiaries, see Page 12.

The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi



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Woodside

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Destinations

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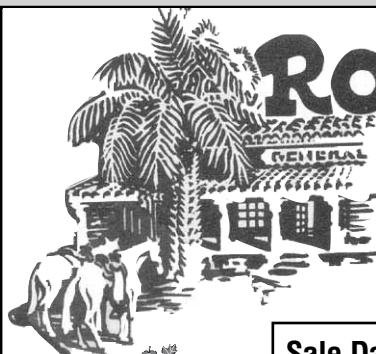
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MEAT

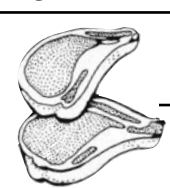
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Junior statesman

A youthful figure led the Pledge of Allegiance at a recent Woodside Town Council meeting. It was Tony Sinclair, son of Councilman Pete Sinclair. The honor of leading the pledge usually rotates among council members, but Mayor Deborah Gordon didn't hesitate to add the bashful youngster to the roster.

'Tis the season

It's that time of year again, when the weather gets cold, the days get shorter and a new Spare the Air season is upon us. That's right, in the midst of your holiday revelries, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District wants you to think twice about relaxing by a crackling wood fire and, come on, would it kill you to take a bus to the mall?

From now until Feb. 16, the air district will issue "Spare the Air Tonight" particulate matter advisories on evenings when tiny specks of lung-clogging crud are predicted to linger in the air.

The best of times, the worst of times?

Departing two-term Menlo Park Councilman Nicholas Jellins' legacy is the subject of a lengthy story in the Sunday, Nov. 26, San Jose Mercury News. It's also the subject of a lengthy thread on the Almanac's Town Square discussion board. If you want to comment on the Jellins Years, post on AlmanacNews.com.

Cut-rate reading

Selby Lane School in Atherton is hosting Scholastic Books' end-of-the-year warehouse sale Dec. 8-10. Books for all ages, from preschoolers to adults, will be discounted at least 50 percent off the cover price. Selby Lane School is located at 170 Selby Lane, about 1 mile west of El Camino Real. Sale hours are 3 to 8 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 8; 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 9, and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 10.

Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Swapping stables in Woodside

■ Siebels make a \$6 million gift to Woodside equine therapy program.

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Woodside residents Tom and Stacey Siebel are donating Dearborn Stables equestrian facility on Runnymede Road to the National Center for Equine Facilitated Therapy, along with \$2 million in cash.

NCEFT officials announced the donation on Monday, Nov. 27, along with plans to relocate

their hippotherapy programs for the disabled to the Siebels' 11.6-acre Dearborn Stables site.

The organization currently operates at a 12-acre site it owns on Portola Road adjacent to the Siebels' residential property, where it offers physical therapy sessions on horseback to special-needs adults and children.

As part of the deal, NCEFT will give its Portola Road property to the Siebels, who will use it as a private equestrian facility, in exchange for

Dearborn Stables, said Casey Terribilini, who chairs the organization's Board of Directors.

Mr. Terribilini said that accessibility is a problem at the NCEFT's hilly, unpaved Portola Road property, particularly in winter, when about half the site is too muddy to be usable.

"Dearborn is all paved and flat — it's like the Taj Mahal for us," Mr. Terribilini told the

See **SIEBEL**, page 10

Fergusson likely to be next mayor

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Don't expect the naming of Menlo Park's next mayor to be the dramatic affair it was last year. All signs point to Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson's being elected to fill the post when the new City Council takes office Dec. 5.

According to the city's mayoral policy, Ms. Fergusson and Councilman Andy Cohen are the only members of the council eligible to pick up the gavel, as council members must have at least one year of council experience to become mayor.

Their colleagues — John Boyle, Richard Cline and Heyward Robinson — were elected to the council Nov. 7.

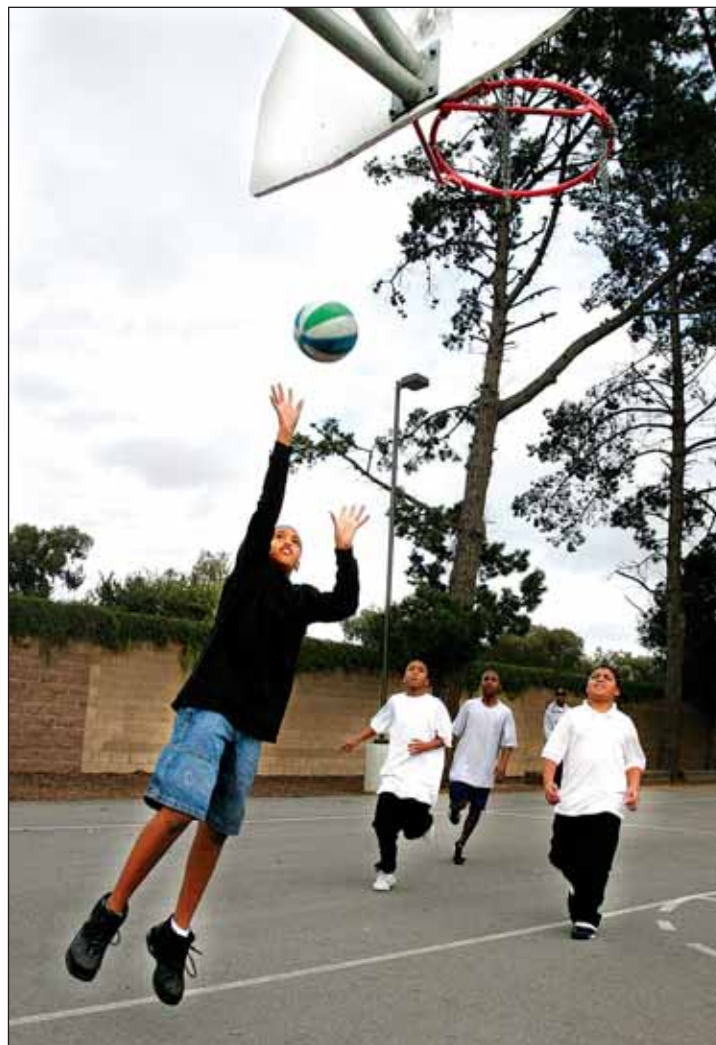
The policy is nonbinding, and was shunned twice by the council majority of Lee Duboc, Nicholas Jellins and Mickie Winkler.

See **MAYOR**, page 10

He shoots ...

He scores! Sixth-grader Blair Mendy takes a leaping shot at the basket in a game organized by the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula's after-school program at Flood School in North Fair Oaks.

The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi



Atherton sues, but wants to continue talking to Sequoia school district

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Although the town of Atherton has sued to stop the construction of a \$26 million performing arts center at Menlo-Atherton High School, the town is still interested in talking with the high school district and with the city of Menlo Park, which plans to share use of the theater, Atherton's mayor says.

"What I hope is that both of us will start backing down

because we're very close to having it resolved positively," Mayor Charles Marsala said.

But Pat Gemma, superintendent of the Sequoia Union High School District, said the dispute still must go through mandatory mediation. "If it does go to court, I think it will be decided very quickly," he added. "I just regret that the lawsuit was filed."

The complaint alleges that the district acted prematurely and illegally by exempting the project from environmental analysis

— something school districts are allowed to do under certain circumstances — before the district's Board of Trustees approved it.

The lawsuit asks the court to "vacate and set aside" the theater plans until an environmental impact report is done. The district had hoped to put the theater project out to bid next spring.

Impacts of concern to Atherton include rainwater runoff, traffic congestion and increased calls to the police department, town officials say.

State law tends to support school districts in disputes with local governments. The Civic Center Act, part of the state's education code, requires school boards to set guidelines for use of school facilities as community gathering places for activities such as artistic and recreational uses.

One community looking at M-A's theater is the city of Menlo Park. At its Nov. 28 meeting, the City Council may approve a memo of understanding to pay \$2.6 million to share use of the theater. The Sequoia district's Board of Trustees has already approved the memo.

"I believe they'll sign it," said

See **SUIT**, page 9



What Every Parent Needs to Know About Eating Disorders

If Your Child:

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- * Fears gaining weight
- * Is underweight
- * Denies seriousness of low weight
- * Exercises excessively
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Local lawyer turned author offers counsel on remodels

By Stephanie Cadora

Special to the Almanac

Who among homeowners and contractors could imagine that going through a remodel could be fun and exciting?

The answer is Nancy Chillag, an attorney and civic leader who remodeled her Menlo Park home with her contractor husband, with suggestions from their three daughters.

In her new book, "How to Survive a Remodel," Ms. Chillag describes how much fun she and her family had in adding to their Menlo Park home, and how input from family members helped make their project succeed. The book even includes a page on planning for a pet's living spaces and doors.

A Menlo Park attorney for 20 years, specializing in construction, real estate and general business law, Ms. Chillag also remodeled a previous home and, more recently, her

sleek, art-filled office.

She based "How to Survive a Remodel" on her own experience, that of her husband's contracting company and other people's remodels.

She was motivated to write the book because "I was telling clients the same thing over and over," she explains. "Now I give them the book to read. And contractors buy it to give to their clients."

Ms. Chillag is trying to reduce litigation by educating people. "It can be easy," she says. "The book is basically a tool homeowners can use to give them a road map" of what to do.

The key to success, she says, is to plan in advance along with the whole family, get the right contractor and, especially, put everything in writing. In addition, get organized before construction and determine whether putting items in storage is worth it.

Ms. Chillag also wrote chapters on what happens during and after construction.

"People are taken advantage of more often than they should be," she says. "Not everything

can be fixed. Do your homework."

But not all in her work life is about the building trade. She was for several years the chair of Menlo Park's Arts Commission, leading the charge in advocating for a public arts ordinance that was eventually enacted into law. (The ordinance was rescinded by a subsequent City Council.)

In 2005, she and Gerald Brett of Palo Alto started a nonprofit, Site Creations, to seek grants to promote public art in Silicon Valley.

And therein lies the subject of her next book. "I want to discuss public art from all viewpoints, based on my experience with the Arts Commission, and on the experience of artists," she says.

Included in public art, she says, are "murals, sculptures, and functional art like benches on California Avenue (in Palo Alto), stained glass windows and mosaic walkways."

Site Creations has partnered with an organization in South Korea to provide an artist who will display art at Santa Clara University next summer.

In her spare time, Ms. Chillag writes a quarterly column for the trade magazine Qualified Remodeler.

"I enjoy writing books, and enjoy public speaking," she says. "I would like to do more of it in the future."

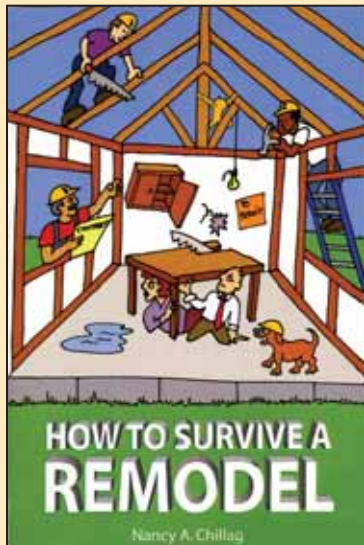
Ms. Chillag decided to self-publish her books, including an earlier publication, "Building by the Book: Legal Advice for Contractors," to save time and retain editorial control.

"How to Survive a Remodel" is available at Kepler's bookstore in Menlo Park and on Ms. Chillag's Web site, www.chillag.com. **A**



Michael Winokur

Nancy Chillag has just published her second book — a survival guide of sorts.



Hillview student awaits decision on gun threat

No decision in the case of the seventh-grader who admitted threatening to bring a gun to Hillview Middle School and harm other students Oct. 10 has been reached by the Menlo Park City School District board after a Nov. 16 administrative hearing on possible expulsion.

The student admitted to the criminal charges in court on Nov. 14 and received a sentence

of probation and counseling, according to Eddie Thomas, San Mateo County deputy district attorney.

The student's counselor has been granted the authority to decide the length of the counseling, and the student's probation officer will determine how long the student needs supervision.

School trustees have three options to consider: to expel the

student; who then would not be allowed to return to school for the rest of the school year; to not expel the student, who then could return to school; to formally expel, then suspend the expulsion, enabling the student to return to school on probation.

Meanwhile, the school has been providing home schooling to the student as required by law.

The Almanac's Online Gathering Place

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The Almanac
ONLINE

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



The End of the Housing Slowdown?

Q: I have seen a house I want to buy but I am reluctant to make an offer because I am concerned that house prices in the Bay Area will be lower next year. What would you advise me to do?

A: If the past few weeks are any indication of what is coming in 2007, sales have picked up at all price levels. While it is too soon to tell whether this is a trend it certainly feels like the market is gaining strength. There are many buyers in the market who, like you, are just waiting for the right property or the right moment to buy. That moment may be now.

If you like the house you are

considering, and it meets your needs and goals, you should not hesitate to make an offer. Interest rates are still very good and you never know if rates will go up in the future. If you plan to live in the property at least five to seven years, you should not be too concerned about possible price fluctuations in the coming months.

Once the buying season begins in early 2007, you may wish that you had bought in December. November and December can be two of the best months for buyers, if they stay in the market. I think you should go ahead and buy that house.

For answers to any questions you may have on real estate, you may e-mail me at mcorman@apr.com or call 462-1111, Alain Pinel Realtors. I also offer a free market analysis of your property.

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Celebrating the end of an era, starting a new one

Former students, teachers, families say farewell to “PVS” — the Portola Valley School

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

The spirit of the long-closed Portola Valley School, known affectionately as “PVS,” soared again Oct. 12 when the town of Portola Valley staged a farewell and tribute to the elementary school that was the hub of the growing community from 1948 to 1976.

The event was held because the town plans to tear down the buildings that housed the school for about a quarter-century to make way for a new Town Center complex.

The site, today’s 765 Portola Road, had housed an elementary school since the first one opened in the fall of 1894 until the 1976 closure of PVS. The school was closed because of its location on the San Andreas Fault and declining enrollment. Students were shifted to newer schools, which were reorganized. Ormondale became a K-5 school and Corte Madera housed grades 6-8.

The school property, sold to the town of Portola Valley in 1975, became the Town Center for the next 30 years.

“This is a poignant time for all of us,” said Mayor Steve Toben, who

arranged and opened the Oct. 12 program. “We’re here to celebrate the passing of an era and the creation of an era of safe building.”

About 80 former students and teachers — as well as parents, friends, and grandparents of PVS students — turned out for the event in the old school courtyard.

Mayor Toben introduced “Jonny” Silver, who started kindergarten at PVS in 1958. Twenty years later he was installed as a Town Council member in the former kindergarten room where he had pretended to take naps years earlier.

“PVS taught me to think for myself,” Mr. Silver said. He remembers suggesting Bob Dylan’s “The Times They Are A-changing” as the Class of 1967’s graduation song.

Bunny Dawson, another speaker, began volunteering at PVS when the Dawsons’ first child started school in 1955. She had never before lived in a small community where parents were so involved in the school, she said. She joined Mabel Crittenden in organizing the first library at PVS, and later staffed the library at Ormondale School.

Former teacher Robin Toewssaid, “I’ve spent half of my life teaching in Portola Valley, and it’s a view of life



Photo courtesy of The Almanac/David Boyce

Ormondale third-graders wrote lyrics to the music of John Lennon’s song, “Imagine,” and sang them at the event. The lyrics imagined how they wanted Portola Valley to be in the future. Shown, from left, are Pippa Thompson, Raidy Clare Stronck, Caroline Buchsbaum and Sally Carlson.

I’ll never forget.” She was hired at PVS by Principal Tony Rose in 1959, and he became her mentor.

She was later the teacher in charge when Ormondale opened; she brought her students outdoors for poetry and art, and made the California Gold Rush come alive for fourth-graders at Corte Madera and Ormondale.

Later in the ceremony, Ormon-

dale third-graders in teacher Linda Vlastic’s class, who study the history of Portola Valley, scrambled to dig up a time capsule, buried in 1968. Its contents: a weathered yearbook with a picture of the class of 1968 and a squirt gun. The students came up with suggestions for what could be buried in the new time capsule at the Town Center site, and sang their own verses to John

Lennon’s song, “Imagine.”

Tony Rose, former teacher and principal at PVS and a Portola Valley School District superintendent, stepped up to the speaker’s platform at the end of the event to pay tribute to the school and the people who contributed to its success. See separate story, this page, for excerpts from his remarks. ■

Tony Rose recalls PVS days

Below are remarks by Anthony L. Rose, hired as a teacher at Portola Valley School in 1951 and later appointed principal of the school and superintendent of the district. His daughter Jessica and son Derek attended district schools. He continues to live in the district at his home off Old La Honda Road.

I look at everyone here and can see how excited you all are to begin the building of a new community center and library. I have to be honest ... my feelings today are a little bitter-sweet. And yet, I know exactly why you are all so excited.

You see, in 1951 I was hired as a teacher at Portola Valley School. At the time, the school consisted of six classrooms on this very site.

The school was small; I cannot recall how many children attended. But the school was a wonderful community of families and a wonderful place to teach. Within four years, I became the principal and later superintendent of Portola Valley schools. Starting salary, \$10,000.

And this is the part of the story where my path crosses your path

today. You see, 50 years ago we began the enormous task of getting this school site constructed. The community was growing and we needed much more than six classrooms. We had reached the point where we used the “Little Red Schoolhouse” as two classrooms, and even converted an old prune-pickers’ shack, on the back of school grounds, into a school room. We wanted to avoid double sessions at school.

At the same time, we were working to fund and build a brand new school. Complete with an office, staffroom, multi-use room and lots of classrooms. The whole community was involved in this — just as you all are on your Town Center.

At that time, the Westridge housing development was beginning. In order to fund and justify our school project with the state, we had to verify our school needs. I remember driving around the open fields of Westridge with Frank Mendoza, the beloved school handy man and bus driver (who could have been voted mayor of this town!). We counted the water meters set out on the undeveloped lots. Each meter helped us justify

construction of classrooms.

It sounds like you all have the same dedication to your schools and community as we did 50 years ago. Our community was small and strong. Parents were very active in our school, filling in on whatever was needed. Two parents, Bunny Dawson and Mabel Crittenden, realized we needed a school library. They quickly headed up a committee of other mothers and used a library cart full of books to roll from classroom to classroom until a space was found.

We also had a running creek through the playground. It never caused any problems with the children. However, one night it overflowed, flooding the classrooms. Word quickly spread, and soon we had many parents arrive at the school to sweep out the water, and classes began as usual the next morning.

This site was also home to wonderful school traditions — May Day Celebration. It was folk dancing, and songs performed by the school children, with a softball game and a potluck meal. And once our multi-use room was constructed, it hosted many wonderful



Photo courtesy of The Almanac/David Boyce

Tony Rose was a teacher and principal at the old Portola Valley School.

band, choral groups, and Gilbert and Sullivan musical productions.

I hope I have taken you back in time to give you a sense of what it was like here when we built this school. ... It holds many fond memories, and you can understand now why I feel a little sentimental today.

I would like to use this time to recognize the community of people that worked so hard 50 years ago to build our school in

this town. They were dedicated teachers and staff, school board members, new families and established farming families.

And I want to recognize how fortunate we all are that the spirit of community involvement that began on this site 50 years ago when we built this school still exists today as we look ahead to a new Town Center.

I am looking forward to using the new library.

Council considers using cameras to catch, ticket red-light runners

■ Cameras could be at busy intersections by July.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

Even if there aren't any police officers around, drivers who run red lights in Menlo Park may still get caught. The City Council, at its Nov. 28 meeting, will consider authorizing the installation of cameras at busy intersections in order to catch and ticket red-light runners.

The council meets at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets. Check Almanac-News.com for a news update.

If the cameras are approved, police would check license plates on the photos and mail violators the tickets.

Police Chief Bruce Goitia has proposed cameras be up and running at the following intersections as early as July:

■ northbound Bayfront Expressway at Willow Road

■ eastbound Marsh Road at Bayfront Expressway

■ both sides of El Camino Real at Ravenswood Avenue

■ both sides of El Camino Real at Valparaiso Avenue

■ westbound Ravenswood Avenue at El Camino Real

The city is considering installing cameras because there are currently no officers whose primary assignment is traffic enforcement, said city staff.

The council will consider a five-year contract with Los Angeles-based Redflex Traffic Systems, which would install — at no cost to the city — video and still-motion cameras.

Under the deal, the city would pay Redflex \$6,350 per

month for each installed camera, but the deal is contingent on the city's receiving at least \$8,500 a month in citation fines.

The agreement is structured this way to make sure it is at least "cost neutral" to the city, Chief Goitia said in a staff report.

The typical fine for a red-light violation is about \$320, and about \$180 of that goes into the city's coffers, according to Chief Goitia.

If the contract is approved, the city would have to add one-half of a full-time-equivalent officer to view the footage and administer the tickets — a cost that would also be covered by the revenue from citation fines, Chief Goitia said.

The contract calls for the installation of up to 20 cameras citywide. ■

Atherton wants to continue talks

SUIT
continued from page 5

Ed LaVigne, the district's assistant superintendent of administrative services. "We've worked hard on this (memo) for the last 12 to 18 months. We've constructed a document that we believe all three agencies, Atherton included, can live with."

In anticipation of Menlo Park's council discussion, Mayor Marsala said in an e-mail message that he has spoken with new council member John Boyle and current members Kelly Ferguson and Mayor Nicholas Jellins.

The town of Atherton is concerned over Menlo Park's planned use of the theater, Mayor Marsala said. One proposal, dismissed by Menlo Park, would require Menlo Park to get a permit from Atherton to change a preplanned event schedule or deviate from the use pattern set during the first year of operation. Atherton sees its authority on this issue as coming from a town ordinance that requires special-event permits for non-school uses of campus facilities.

"I don't think the facility will be abused," Mayor Marsala said. Menlo Park's acceptance of Atherton's oversight of schedule changes would be "a gesture" to Atherton, he said.

Asked what type of event would result in a permit denial, Mayor Marsala said it would be a schedule change "that would not

be conducive to the area," such as a Bill Graham concert or theatergoers departing at 3 a.m.

Atherton's ordinance, said Mr. Gemma, is pre-empted by the school district's obligation to open its facilities to the community and set guidelines for use. This matter may present opportunities for a compromise, he added.

Anatomy of a dispute

A long conversation led up to the lawsuit. Since April of this year — when Sequoia agreed to stop the clock on Atherton's fast-expiring right to sue — district, Atherton and Menlo Park officials have met five or six times, according to Superintendent Gemma.

Sequoia canceled its agreement and restarted Atherton's lawsuit clock just weeks ago, after the district and town officials couldn't agree on a date for a meeting that would have brought the public and the entire City Council into the discussion. Atherton filed suit.

Mr. Gemma said he "struggled" to find a workable meeting date, but noted that if a lawsuit was coming, better sooner than later so that the district might stay on track for seeking construction bids in the spring. "We continue to go back and forth with the town," he said.

Mayor Marsala said he would like talks to continue.

In response to Atherton's concern about traffic, the Sequoia

district has a standing offer to share the cost of a traffic study with Atherton and Menlo Park, said Mr. LaVigne, the district's assistant superintendent.

Creating a new entrance to M-A at the intersection of Ravenswood Avenue and Middlefield Road would help, he said. Atherton would have to approve such a step.

Asked about excess rainwater runoff, Mr. LaVigne said he was unsure about the theater's impact, but runoff will collect in and be released from new "dry wells." "If you're asking 'Are we going to handle Atherton's 50-year problem with street-water runoff?' the answer is no," he said. "The water that collects on Middlefield Road is largely Atherton water."

School districts can forgo environmental analysis if a project adds fewer than 10 classrooms or increases campus enrollment by less than 25 percent. To trigger an impact report, enrollment would have to increase by 450 students, which this project does not do, Mr. LaVigne said.

Atherton also cites a rising need for police services if a theater is built. "For one thing, we're not going to have any Altamont Rolling Stones concerts," Mr. LaVigne said. "There's no Woodstock planned. We think that's a stretch." ■

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MAYOR*continued from page 5*

The three council members ignored the policy when councilwomen Duboc and Winkler took office in 2002, and last year, when they named Mr. Jellins mayor instead of Ms. Fergusson. Instead, Ms. Fergusson was named the city's "mayor pro tem," or vice mayor.

Going into the Dec. 5 meeting, it looks as if council members will follow the policy, and are leaning toward naming Ms. Fergusson mayor.

"I haven't had any discussion

with anyone regarding who should be mayor, but I assume [Ms. Fergusson] will be the person to fill the role," said Mr. Boyle.

Ms. Fergusson apparently has support from council members-elect Cline and Robinson, who made a toast to her as "the city's next mayor" at their victory party.

Ms. Fergusson said she "hopes" to be named mayor, and would like Mr. Cohen to be the new mayor pro tem.

The mayor chairs council meetings, serves as the ceremonial head of the city, and traditionally has a role in setting council meeting agendas.

'One Menlo Park'

After the new council takes office and chooses a mayor, the city is scheduled to hold a reception open to the public labeled "One Menlo Park."

The reception is tentatively scheduled for 8 p.m., at the Gatehouse, near the intersection of Laurel Street and Ravenswood Avenue.

Ms. Fergusson said the motivation behind the event is ending the city's historical political divide.

"With the election behind us, it's important for everyone to know that we need everyone's participation to make our city strong," she said in a press release. ■

Swapping stables**SIEBEL***continued from page 5*

Almanac.

The new location will allow the organization to significantly expand its programs, he said. Currently, the NCEFT serves about 100 people a week. Besides improved parking and accessibility, the Dearborn site includes a 3,800-square-foot residence, an 8,400-square-foot barn, a 14,000-square-foot covered riding ring and a 27,000-square-foot outdoor riding ring, as well as barns and

paddocks, Mr. Terribilini said.

The Siebels have made a number of improvements to the property, formerly the Charter Oaks public boarding stable, since they bought it in March 2002.

All told, the Siebels' donation is worth about \$6 million. The Dearborn Stables property has been appraised at more than \$16 million, Mr. Terribilini said. NCEFT's Portola Road property has an appraised value of \$12 million, he said.

Because NCEFT officials were worried about the additional costs associated with running and maintaining the Dearborn Stables property, the Siebels sweetened the deal to include \$2 million for the organization to use as an endowment fund.

"The Siebels have been longtime financial supporters of our organization, and we are grateful for their unwavering commitment and generosity," Mr. Terribilini said.

The NCEFT still needs permission from the town of Woodside to operate at the Dearborn Stables; a request for a conditional use permit is on the agenda for the Planning Commission's Dec. 6 meeting.

Founded in 1971, NCEFT provides equine-assisted therapy, research and education. It employs therapeutic riding to children and adults affected by conditions such as cerebral palsy, premature birth, genetic abnormalities or traumatic brain injuries. ■

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Belle Haven Clinic helps and heals neighbors

Low-income patients, especially those without insurance, are beneficiaries of neighborhood clinic

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Many people regularly put off going to the doctor — they're too tired, they don't have the time, or they just don't want to go.

But a different reason keeps some residents of Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood out of the doctor's office: They can't afford it.

Whether it's the cost of health insurance, prescription medication or the difficulty of missing time at work, there are more than a few financial hurdles keeping low-income families from seeing a doctor.

That's why there's the Belle Haven Clinic.

Adjacent to the Onetta Harris Senior Center off Terminal Avenue, the clinic serves 10 to 14 patients a day, most of them low-income residents from Menlo Park and East Palo Alto.

"We help patients at low or no cost," said Margaret Allen, the clinic's physician assistant. "We want to get the people who aren't getting seen regularly by a doctor."

A large portion of the clinic's patients are seniors from the Belle Haven neighborhood who are uninsured due to their immigration status, Ms. Allen said. She said the clinic gives them a place to go for a range of



Belle Haven Clinic benefits from the Almanac Holiday Fund this year. It is located at 100 Terminal Ave., adjacent to the Onetta Harris Senior Center, in Menlo Park. The clinic is satellite clinic for the Ravenswood Family Health Center of East Palo Alto. The clinic is currently open to patients four hours a day, but staff plans to expand those hours to see patients evenings and weekends.

health services, from flu shots to treatment for chronic illness.

Formerly run by San Mateo County, the clinic has been a satellite clinic of the Ravenswood Family Health Center of East Palo Alto since September.

The nonprofit family center provides health services to low-income communities east of Bayshore, and took the clinic under its umbrella and brought in its own staff with the goal of expanding the capabilities of the clinic and the number of patients it can serve, said Kathleen Alexander, the center's



Marjan Sadoughi/The Almanac

Margaret Allen, a physician assistant at the Belle Haven Clinic in Menlo Park, listens for Ofelia Ala's heartbeat. Ms. Ala's daughter, Blanca Pineda, waits in the exam room.

development director.

Since the nonprofit took over, the clinic has been able to handle emergencies, and treat children and walk-in patients — areas the clinic had previously been unable to address when it had only one on-site doctor.

The clinic is open to patients four hours a day on weekdays; with additional licensing, it will

expand its hours, Ms. Allen said.

"If we expand our hours to weekends and evenings we can accommodate more of the working poor — the people that may own a house, but can't spare time away from work to come see us," she said.

Ms. Allen and Erika Simpson, the clinic coordinator, stressed that just because the clinic

serves low-income residents, the staff by no means offers a lower quality of service.

"We may always want and need things, whether that's more space or more resources, but we still aim for and provide high-quality care," Ms. Simpson said. "Our goal is not to just be in the community — we want to be part of the community." ■

What's happening after school at Flood, Belle Haven, McNair schools?

Boys & Girls club provides after-school academic programs at two new sites

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

School's out. Students shift gears at James Flood Magnet School in Menlo Park and move into the after-school program on the same campus.

This scenario now also takes place five days a week at Belle Haven School in Menlo Park and McNair Academy in East Palo Alto. The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula, in collaboration with the Ravenswood City School District, provides these after-school programs, which combine academics and enrichment.

Georganne Morin, Boys & Girls Clubs academic director, said the new Belle Haven and McNair programs are an expansion of the successful after-school program of the clubs' Center for a New Generation, housed at Flood School since 1997.

"We analyzed our program,



Gifts to the Almanac's Holiday Fund help support academic and enrichment programs for youths at the Boys & Girls Club of the Peninsula's clubhouses in Menlo Park, East Palo Alto and Redwood City, and at after-school programs at centers at Flood and Belle Haven schools in Menlo Park and McNair Academy in East Palo Alto.

kept the positive mentoring and parent involvement components, and made some changes" as a response to recent state curriculum standards and the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, she said.

The Harvard-based "BELL" program was introduced this fall at all three schools. It has worked "amazing well at East Coast cities with similar populations," Ms. Morin said.

The centers' K-3 after-school program focuses on learning to read, building skills, and then shifting to "reading to learn," she said.

Research from the National Dropout Prevention Center indicates that an emphasis on early literacy — reading and writing proficiency taught in the early years — greatly reduces the likelihood that students will fail in school, according to Chris Canter, Boys & Girls Clubs' spokesman.

Working in small groups of about 10 students is a key to students' success. Mentors, often college students, work with the older students and also become role models.

Each day, students spend

time on reading, math skills, and homework, with elective choices such as cooking, drama, computer lab, and flag football along with the physical education program "Fitness for Life." There are opportunities for community service projects, particularly for upper-grade students.

Daron Meacham, a sixth-grader and Flood "scholar of the month," said he does homework, enjoys cooking and drama classes, writes for the newspaper and

was captain of the flag football team through the after-school program.

Eighth-graders Sabat Teklu, Maya Combs and Reggie Williams said director Sean Mendy is a big help in guiding them through the high school process, taking them to high school open houses and pointing out that they have choices.

"Our goal," said Mr. Mendy, is to get all of our eighth-graders

See **CLUB**, continued on next page

About the Boys & Girls Clubs

The Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula, founded in 1958, is the largest youth development organization on the Peninsula. Some 2,600 boys and girls, ages 6 to 18, come after school and during the summer to take part in programs and activities at the four clubhouses. They are:
Menlo Park: McNeil Family Clubhouse, 401 Pierce Road; phone, 322-6255.

Redwood City: Mervin G. Morris Clubhouse, 1109 Hilton St.; phone, 364-0176.

East Palo Alto: Moldaw-Zaffaroni Clubhouse, 2031 Pulgas Ave.; phone, 330-1090.

Menlo Park: Center for a New Generation, James Flood Magnet School, 320 Sheridan Drive; phone, 321-8935.

For more information, call 322-8065 or check www.bgcp.org.

Volunteers 'treat everybody with dignity' at St. Anthony's

By Stephanie Cadora

Special to the Almanac

Only six weeks ago, Max Torres and his kitchen crew turned off one of the freezers, because there was nothing to put in it. Now, people are arriving at St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room bearing turkeys and other foods — and the freezer is filling up again.

St. Anthony's, the largest dining room serving meals to the needy between San Francisco and San Jose, "provides hot, nutritious meals to those who are hungry," says Mr. Torres, the dining room manager. It serves 600 meals daily from Monday to Saturday, and provides meals to "Clara-Mateo Homeless Shelter in Menlo Park, St. Francis of Assisi Church in East Palo Alto and Maple Street Shelter and Sequoia Children's Center in Redwood City, he adds.

St. Anthony's relies entirely on the goodwill of the public for money, food and volunteers, and of local grocery stores for the giveaway table, where there is a daily spread of pastries, day-old bread and fresh produce for the taking. There is also free clothing on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The dining room does not receive any government assistance or corporate grants.

On a daily basis, St. Anthony's needs donations of meats, oils, margarine, produce — whatever is in season — as well as miscellaneous items like beans, lentils, sugar and fresh milk,

St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room is a recipient of the Almanac Holiday Fund this year. On Dec. 25, the dining room will serve holiday meals from noon until 2:30 p.m. The toy giveaway will take place on Dec. 23 from 8 a.m. to about noon. The dining room will need volunteers for Christmas. The address is 3500 Middlefield Road, Menlo Park, 94025. For information, call 365-9664.

Mr. Torres says.

The dream child of the late Dominic Pereira, the dining room began in 1974 with the mission of "feeding and clothing the poor,"

'We don't make miracles — we rely on them.'

DINING ROOM MANAGER MAX TORRES

Mr. Torres says. The volunteers and staff "treat everybody with dignity."

Mr. Torres started working for the dining room in 1982. In the past 20 years, he has been a dishwasher, truck driver and, now, dining room manager.

He says he is inspired by the people he works with and the volunteers. "The volunteers are priceless. They derive satisfaction from serving people who are in need, and making a difference."

"We don't make miracles — we rely on them," says Mr. Torres. ■

CLUB

Continued from previous page

into private schools or college prep programs, including "College Track."

Schools in the Ravenswood K-8 district are designated a "21st Century Learning Center" and receive federal funds to support the school-based, after-school programs.

The collaboration is an example of the Boys & Girls Clubs' increasing partnerships with other community organizations to provide more opportunities to help young people from low-income and high-crime neighborhoods develop character, talents and skills, said Peter Fortenbaugh, the clubs' executive director. ■

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Giving to the Holiday Fund

Your gift helps children and others in need



Contributions to the Holiday Fund will go directly to the programs that benefit Peninsula residents. Last year, Almanac readers contributed more than \$100,000, and with available matching grants, over \$150,000 was raised for 10 agencies that feed the hungry, house the homeless and provide numerous other services to those in need.

Contributions to the Holiday Fund will be

matched to the extent possible by generous community corporations, foundations and individuals, including the Rotary Club of Menlo Park, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. No administrative costs will be deducted from the gifts, which are tax-deductible as permitted by law.

All donations to the Holiday Fund will be shared equally among the 10 recipient agencies.

This year, the following agencies will be supported by the Almanac's Holiday Fund:

- **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula**
Provides after-school academic support and activities for 2,600 young people, 6 to 18, at clubhouses in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood, East Palo Alto and Redwood City and offers programs at Flood and Belle Haven schools in Menlo Park and McNair School in East Palo Alto.
- **Ecumenical Hunger Program**
Provides emergency food, clothing, household essentials, and sometimes financial assistance to families in need, regardless of religious preference, including Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for more than 2,000 households.
- **Family Connections**
Provides free pre-school programs for children from low-income families in Belle Haven, parts of Redwood City and East Palo Alto. Parents must be involved in the education program, which operates on the Belle Haven School campus and the Clara-Mateo Homeless Shelter in Menlo Park Monday-Saturday mornings.
- **Ravenswood Family Health Center**
Provides primary medical and preventive health care for all ages at its clinics in Belle Haven and East Palo Alto. It also operates a mobile clinic at school sites. Of the 16,500 registered patients, most are low income and uninsured from the ethnically diverse East Palo Alto, Belle Haven, and North Fair Oaks area.
- **InnVision Peninsula Programs**
Works with homeless and at-risk families and individuals to reach self-sufficient living. Services reach 6,000 via Opportunity Center of the Midpeninsula, Palo Alto Food Closet, Hotel de Zink Rotating Church Shelter, Breaking Bread Hot Meals, Clara-Mateo Alliance Shelter, and Elsa Segovia Center.
- **St. Anthony's Padua Dining Room**
Serves hundreds of hot meals six days a week to people in need who walk through the doors. St. Anthony's, funded entirely by voluntary contributions, is the largest dining room for the needy between San Francisco and San Jose. It also offers emergency food and clothing assistance.
- **Second Harvest Food Bank**
The largest collector and distributor of food on the Peninsula, Second Harvest Food Bank distributed 30 million pounds of food last year. It gathers donations from individuals and businesses and distributes food to some 162,000 people each month through more than 700 agencies and distribution sites in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.
- **Shelter Network**
Provides short-term shelter and transitional housing and services to more than 3,100 homeless people and children each year. Offers five programs for families and individuals to become self-sufficient and return to permanent housing.
- **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coalition**
Provides educational programs for youth and adults to help teens make healthy choices that will result in lower rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Its "Teen Talk" program last year served 3,650 youth at 23 public school sites in the county.
- **Youth and Family Enrichment Services**
Provides over 20 programs to help people who struggle with substance abuse, domestic violence, mental health, relationship and communications issues. The mission of YFES is to strengthen communities by empowering youth, families, and individuals to overcome challenges through counseling, education, and residential services.

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For more information about the Peninsula Community Foundation go to www.pcf.org. The Almanac will make every effort to publish donor names for donations received before Dec. 31, 2006, unless the donor checks the anonymous box. All donations will be acknowledged by mail.



Sitting in San Mateo County's historic Courtroom A, Elizabeth Gheleta listens as almost a dozen witnesses testify to her 38 years of service to prisoners and their families.

Elizabeth Gheleta *retires* ...

For 38 years she helped jail inmates and their families through *the Service League*

By **MARION SOFTKY** *Almanac Staff Writer* ■ Photos courtesy of **HAGOP'S PHOTOGRAPHY**

“**P**EOPLE TALK ABOUT RECYCLING THINGS,”

SAYS ELIZABETH GHELETA.

“We need to recycle people and not just throw them away. We need to develop more support for people coming back from jail or prison.”

For 38 years, the soft-spoken Menlo Oaks resident has been doing just that. As executive director of the Service League of San Mateo County, Ms. Gheleta has eased the lives of inmates in county jails and their families.

Through the Service League, thousands of men and women who have served time in jail have been able to recycle their lives, moving from the role of outcast to productive member of society.

Now Ms. Gheleta is retiring, and the



Diane Rummel, left, development director of the Service League, and former Supervisor **Mike Nevin**, Ms. Gheleta's successor as director, applaud after she is declared guilty and sentenced.

county is saying thank you.

“Elizabeth is remarkable,” says San Mateo County Sheriff Don Horsley. “Not many people care about people in jail. The Service League serves a vital function. Without them, jail is a revolving door.”

More than 500 Service League volunteers do everything from tutoring and offering religious services to providing contact between prisoners and their families. “That reduces the tension and helps us run the jail,” Sheriff Horsley says.

Sheriff Horsley also credits Ms. Gheleta and the Service League with creating four homes to help inmates make the transition from jail to the community. Hope House serves women who are fighting substance abuse or who are pregnant; FAR House helps men. “If people are to be successful out of jail, they need help to get on their feet,” he says.

In August, Ms. Gheleta was one of three women in the county to receive the Jefferson Award for Public Service. This national award goes to “unsung community heroes — ordinary people who do extraordinary work without expectation of recognition or reward.”

The award reads, “Her passion and compassion have helped inmates improve

their chances for success.”

Ms. Gheleta received a stunning sendoff Oct. 21, when several hundred county dignitaries and friends gathered under the dome of the old County Courthouse. The highlight was a mock trial in elegant Courtroom A. With “Judge” Jim Hartnett — a Redwood City councilman — presiding, a jury of county supervisors, judges and past presidents of the Service League found her guilty.

Her crime: “Committing public service with passion, dedication and selflessness.”

Out of China

Ms. Gheleta was born in China. Her beloved father, a British schoolmaster, suffered in a Japanese prison camp; he died shortly after being released. Her mother had escaped from Soviet Russia.

When the Communists overran China, the International Refugee Organization evacuated her family and thousands of others to refugee camps in the Philippines. She lived there for two years, got an amazingly good education, and came to San Francisco when she was 14.

She entered to George Washington High School in San Francisco as a junior and graduated at 16. Two weeks after her 17th birthday, she married Eugene Gheleta, who had a similar history; they had been in the same refugee camp.

During the 1960s, the Gheletas raised three children and built the spacious house in Menlo Oaks where she still lives. She also put herself through college, earning a degree from the University of San Francisco.

As member and president of the PTA at Flood School, Ms. Gheleta experienced the challenges of the times. “The ‘60s were a wonderful, fascinating time,” she says. She helped the kids from the east side of Bayshore to assimilate, and set up volunteer tutoring.

As a result, she says, kids who went through Flood had fewer problems later. “Kids learned to get along in first and second grade; they loved each other.”

By 1968, Ms. Gheleta needed a part-time job. The Service League had one.

Passion and compassion

“Coming as an immigrant, I really felt I could do something for the community and the family,” Ms. Gheleta says during



A jury of former presidents of the Service League, county supervisors and judges takes less than a minute to arrive at Ms. Gheleta's verdict.

Mock trial delivers verdict: *‘Guilty of committing public service with passion, dedication and selflessness.’*

an interview. “We wanted to see if there was a way to keep people from returning to jail — to break the cycle.

“When you grow up in a Third World setting, you see things differently — poverty, people dying in the street,” she continues. “I wanted to help people.”

When she first started with the Service League, Ms. Gheleta was the entire office staff; she did everything. As the agency grew through the 1970s, she worked her way up to director of volunteers. “I’d get people to come and work and keep motivated,” she says.

When she started, the county jail housed about 120 people. Now the men’s and women’s jails in Redwood City hold close to 1,200 prisoners. Many are awaiting trial or serving sentences of less than a year.

“These are not necessarily bad people; they are good people who have made bad choices. They need retraining,” says Mike Nevin, a former San Mateo County Supervisor, who has replaced Ms. Gheleta as executive director of the Service League.



A major crisis came in 1978. Proposition 13 killed 80 percent of county funding for the Service League; the executive director left; and the organization got an eviction notice. Ms. Gheleta says that people believed the agency would close within a year.

Ms. Gheleta was offered the job — “without a pay increase.”

Her first hurdle was to bring around the commander of the jail, who was “not happy with a woman,” she recalls. She prepared a report that explained the league’s programs and how they

would benefit the jail. He went along.

Working with the board, Ms. Gheleta also scraped up “a patchwork of funding that changes from year to year.”

Twenty-eight years later, the Service League has a staff of 25, and a budget close to \$1.5 million. It even owns its own building, a 1910 brick telephone exchange at 727 Middlefield Road in Redwood City, which was remodeled by Ms. Gheleta.

Last year, 556 volunteers spent 31,410 hours making 16,000 personal contacts with inmates and their families. Inmates made 29,706 requests that were processed; 734 children played in the waiting room before visiting their fathers; 2,253 religious services were held; and 1,801 clients received services when they got out of jail.

Hope House

Ms. Gheleta is particularly proud of Hope House. This was established in 1990 to support women coming out of jail. It provides a six-month licensed alcohol and drug rehabilitation program, as well as counseling and training. The Junior League helped set up Hope House, and the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church works with clients.

Since 1990, the Service League reports, 583 women have entered the program, 102 babies have been born, and 72 percent of the graduates are still clean and sober.

Theresa weighed 88 pounds when she got out of jail and went to Hope House. When she completed the program six months later, the 5-foot, 10-inch Redwood City resident weighed 138 pounds. Now she’s got a good job in administration and computer operations at a San Carlos company, and is enjoying her four daughters and two grandsons.

“It’s a miracle,” Theresa says. “When everything seemed hopeless, Hope House gave me hope.”

Theresa’s story contains lessons. She was doing all right as a single mom until her kids grew up and started leaving home. “I was lonely; I started drinking alone,” she says. “Drinking alone is dreadful.”

Theresa was arrested and sent to jail for embezzlement. She heard about Hope House from Service League volunteers while she was in the county jail, but the judge insisted she finish her sentence. Then she got admitted to

See ELIZABETH, next page



Elizabeth Gheleta with retiring Sheriff Don Horsley, who credited her with helping many prisoners avoid the revolving door of going back to jail again and again.



On the witness stand, Kathy Crane, Ms. Gheleta's daughter, testifies.



Ms. Gheleta with her son, Michael Gheleta, her defense attorney in the trial; he argued that no one could have done what she did while raising three children and putting herself through college.

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ELIZABETH

continued from previous page

Hope House.

At Hope House, Theresa participated in the very structured environment: up early, a walk, classes from 9 to 4, cooking three times a week. In parenting class, she recalls, "You learn things you should have done 30 years ago."

Theresa also went through the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step program. "It taught me the steps to recovery," she says. "They loved me when I couldn't love myself."

From those difficult months, Theresa remembers Ms. Gheleta. "She was like an angel from God," she says. "She really put her life in that work."

On trial

It was standing room only in Courtroom A as Elizabeth Gheleta went on trial for "Committing public service with passion, dedication and selflessness."

"Judge" Jim Hartnett called the court to order, "Court Clerk" Mike Nevin swore in the witnesses, Sheriff Don Horsley and Sheriff-elect Greg Munks kept order as bailiffs.

"Prosecuting attorney" Chuck Smith accused Ms. Gheleta of always making sure the candy given prisoners was fresh.

"Don't let them fool you," said "defense attorney" Michael Gheleta, the defendant's son. "There's no way she could have done all the things she is said to have done. She deserves to be free."

Mr. Nevin, now executive director of the Service League, swore a series of witnesses to tell the truth etc. on a variety of books, ranging from "Mother Goose" to the "Palm Beach Diet."

Redwood City Vice Mayor Rosanne Foust presented a proclamation from Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger accusing Ms Gheleta of "exemplary leadership." She took the oath over a



Elizabeth Gheleta shares a moment at the reception with Maryhelen Macpherson of Redwood City, a 20-year staffer and volunteer with the Service League.

videotape of "True Lies."

When Ms. Gheleta's daughter, Kathy Crane, who owns the Yerba Buena native plant nursery on Skyline, took the oath, her brother asked for — and was given — "permission to treat as a hostile witness."

As they described how Ms. Gheleta always prepared a hot meal for the family and celebrated Christmas twice, on Dec. 25 and then again Jan. 7 for Russian Christmas, "Judge" Hartnett snapped, "Don't interrupt your sister."

The guilty verdict was unanimous.

Ms. Gheleta was sentenced to "38 years or lifetime of continued public service, with credit for time served."

What next?

Ms. Gheleta hasn't made specific plans for retirement, but it's obvious she'll stay active. "Life is full of unexpected opportunities. I'm open to them," she says.

She enjoys taking friends up to Skyline for the luxurious teas and lunches her daughter provides at the beautiful native plant nursery established by the late Gerda Isenberg.

And Ms. Gheleta will certainly



Ms. Gheleta's jail ID from the 1970s.

keep volunteering with the Service League. She's already coordinating the Christmas party for children of prisoners, complete with photos taken with Santa to be shared with Mom or Dad. "Last year the Service League provided toys for 400-plus kids," she says happily.

And she's likely to continue encountering personal rewards. Just last July 4, Ms. Gheleta was working at a Kiwanis hot dog stand. A mother came up with her family — including an 8-year-old boy who was born at Hope House.

"She was so grateful at how her life had changed," Ms. Gheleta says. "Without Hope House, that child would be in foster care; she would be in jail."

"That does it. That's what keeps you going." ■

Mike Nevin takes over at Service League

Former San Mateo County Supervisor Mike Nevin may make a perfect fit to succeed Elizabeth Gheleta as executive director of the Service League, which serves prisoners in county jails and their families.

Before entering politics in Daly City, Mr. Nevin was a police officer in San Francisco. Before that, he volunteered for the Catholic Youth Organization, loved social work, and got a medal from the Pope.

"It's like coming home," he says of his new job — which follows an unsuccessful run for state Senate to replace Sen. Jackie Speier.

Mr. Nevin pays tribute to his predecessor and hopes to build on her legacy. "She is a very special lady," he says. "She left a legacy, not just for the Service League, but for people who need support the most. She was always there for the underdog."

Mr. Nevin sees three challenges ahead. He



Mike Nevin

needs to build up funding for the Service League, which has run in the red for the last two years. "We have to market ourselves," he says.

Part of marketing is to increase recognition of the Service League and what it does, particularly in the North County. Even though the jails are in Redwood City, the prisoners come from all parts of the county — and return there, he says. "I want to make us one of the lead non-profit agencies in San Mateo County," he says.

Mr. Nevin also wants to recruit a new generation of volunteers to build on those recruited by Ms. Gheleta.

The Service League particularly needs money and volunteers.

Anyone interested may contact Mr. Nevin at 363-4664, or mnevin@serviceleague.org. For information, go to serviceleague.org.

The Service League is located at 727 Middlefield Road in Redwood City.

By Marion Softky

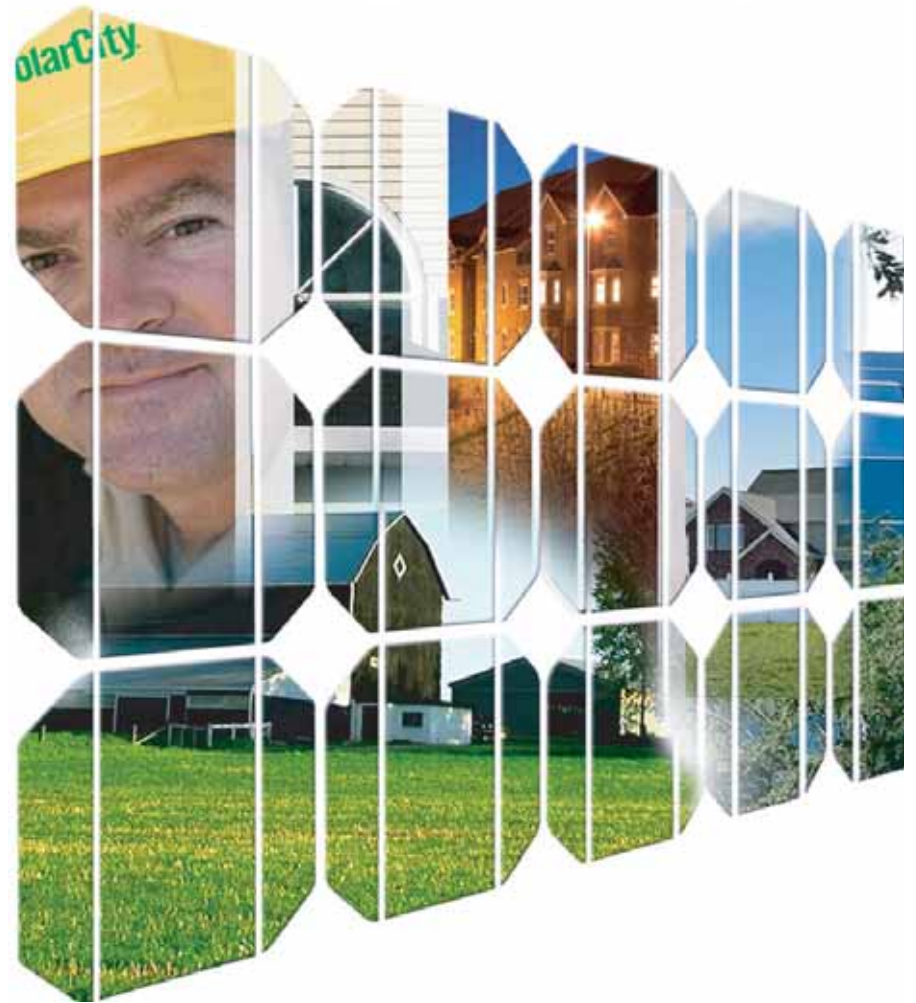
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Big decisions set for final council meeting

Lee Duboc, Nicholas Jellins and Mickie Winkler may be lame ducks on the Menlo Park City Council, but they still have some big decisions to make. The council meets Tuesday, Nov. 28, at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Check AlmanacNews.com for news updates.

Derry project

The council is expected to

■ MENLO WATCH

take some kind of action on two sets of petitions challenging the Derry condo-commercial project — a proposed complex of 135 condominiums and 22,525 square feet of commercial space near El Camino Real.

It could rescind two ordinances it adopted in approving the project in September, or putting the ordinances on the ballot

for the voters to decide. It could also direct staff to check into the legality of the referendum signatures gathered by Menlo Park Tomorrow, the residents' group that led the referendum drive against the project.

The council's decision might be swayed by representatives of Menlo Park Tomorrow and the developer — the San Mateo-based O'Brien Group — who are working to find a compromise on the project.

Auto mall

The council is also expected to take action on a proposed tax-sharing agreement with General Motors that would evenly split sales tax revenues from GM auto sales between the city and the automaker if a proposed auto mall is built. The auto mall is proposed for 22 acres of the Tyco Electronics plant at the intersection of Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road.

Meeting Sunday on logging plan

The San Francisco YMCA will hold a public information meeting Sunday, Dec. 3, to explain and update its controversial proposal to harvest timber on its Camp Jones Gulch property.

The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. at Camp Jones Gulch, 11000 Pescadero Road.

For a full story about the logging plan and the environmental issues raised about it, go to AlmanacNews.com

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■ OBITUARY

George Concannon*Business entrepreneur*

A celebration of the life of George Robert Concannon of Menlo Park will be held at noon Wednesday, Nov. 29, at Christ Church, 815 Portola Road, in Portola Valley. Mr. Concannon, a former Woodside resident, died Nov. 16. He was 87.

Mr. Concannon was born in Berkeley and graduated from Stanford University and Harvard Business School. During World War II, he served as one of the youngest lieutenant commanders in the U.S. Navy, seeing action in both the North Atlantic and South Pacific.

After the war, he worked for Marchant Calculators, then became president of Concannon Vineyard of Livermore, founded by his grandfather, James Concannon, in 1883.

Mr. Concannon's next business

venture was Concannon & Co., which focused on commercial real estate in San Francisco. He also worked for Kaiser Industries, focusing on a housing development on Oahu, Hawaii.

After retiring, Mr. Concannon took up painting and was listed in "Who's Who in the Art World." He was a competitive swimmer, competing at the masters' level internationally well into his 80s. He swam up to the end of his life, say family members.

He also spent many hours volunteering in the chaplain service at the Veterans Affairs Hospital in Palo Alto.

Mr. Concannon was married twice. His first marriage was to Martha Wood. His second wife was Betty Wing Jr., a radio and television personality in the San Francisco Bay area.

He is survived by his children: Elisabeth Concannon of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Richard Concannon of Oakland, Lt. Col. Charles Concannon of Papillion, Nebraska, Cheryl Concannon of Sun Valley, Idaho, Kate Castle of Oakland, Bob Concannon of San Francisco, and Jim Concannon of Darien, Connecticut; 13 grandchildren; six great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

Huddart/Wunderlich EIR meeting set for Nov. 29

A "scoping session" to get public input on what should be studied in the environmental impact report (EIR) for the master plan for Huddart and Wunderlich parks near Woodside will be held Wednesday, Nov. 29, from 7 to 9 p.m., in Independence Hall, 2955 Woodside Road in Wood-

side Town Center.

A copy of the draft Huddart/Wunderlich Master Plan, which has been under study for several years, can be viewed on the San Mateo County parks Web site at eparks.net.

For more information, call Senior Park Planner Sam Herzberg at 363-1823.

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10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist with Choir and Casavant Organ

December 10, Santa Lucia Festival

5:30 p.m. Potluck Smörgåsbord, 7:00 p.m. Santa Lucia Program

December 17, Lessons and Carols

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9:00 P.M. COMMUNION SERVICE

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FOR THE RECORD

■ POLICE CALLS

This information is from the Atherton and Menlo Park police departments and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.

ATHERTON

Grand theft report: Laptop and Blackberry taken from unlocked vehicle parked in driveway, first block of Jennings Lane, Nov. 20.

MENLO PARK

Grand theft report: Laptop stolen from office, 400 block of Pope Street, Nov. 20.

Stolen vehicle reports:

■ 1988 Toyota Camry, 200 block of Newbridge Street, Nov. 17.

■ 1992 Dodge Caravan, Bayfront Expressway and University Avenue, Nov. 21.

Auto burglary reports:

■ Window smashed, stereo, license plate and navigation screen stolen, 1300 block of Willow Road, Nov. 21.

■ Sony game console, football shoes and helmet and clothing stolen, 1300 block of Willow Road, Nov. 21.

Burglary reports:

■ Laptop, gold ring and \$50 cash stolen, 2100 block of Menalto Avenue, Nov. 18.

■ Golf clubs and household items stolen from storage locker, 700 block of Menlo Avenue, Nov. 19.

■ Window smashed and Apple iPod stolen, 800 block of Coleman Avenue, Nov. 19.

■ Toolbox, saw, snow skis and lock stolen, 1300 block of Hoover Street, Nov. 17.

■ \$800 in cash stolen, 1000 block of Madera Avenue, Nov. 20.

Fraud report: ATM card stolen and \$2,000 taken from account, 1900 block of Avy Avenue, Nov. 21.

Assault with deadly weapon report: Two arrests made, 1200 block of Willow Road, Nov. 23.

WOODSIDE

Theft reports:

■ Fraudulent online purchase for \$601 made with victim's credit card number and account information, 2000 block of Greenways Drive, Nov. 15.

■ Wallet stolen from glove box of unlocked vehicle at Canada College, 4000 block of Farm Hill Boulevard, Nov. 16.

Commercial burglary report: Office ransacked and tractor ignition damaged after forced entry, 5000 block of Farm Hill Boulevard, Nov. 20.

Domestic violence report: Verbal argument became physical and man arrested, 3000 block of Tripp Road, Nov. 17.

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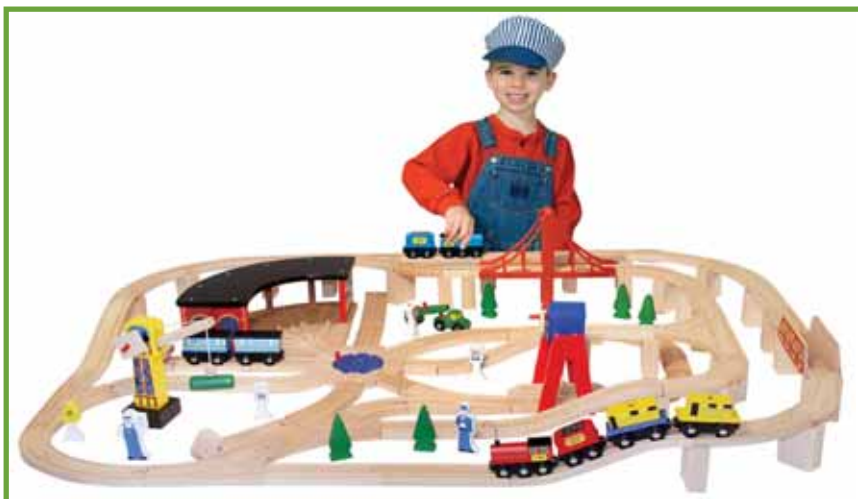
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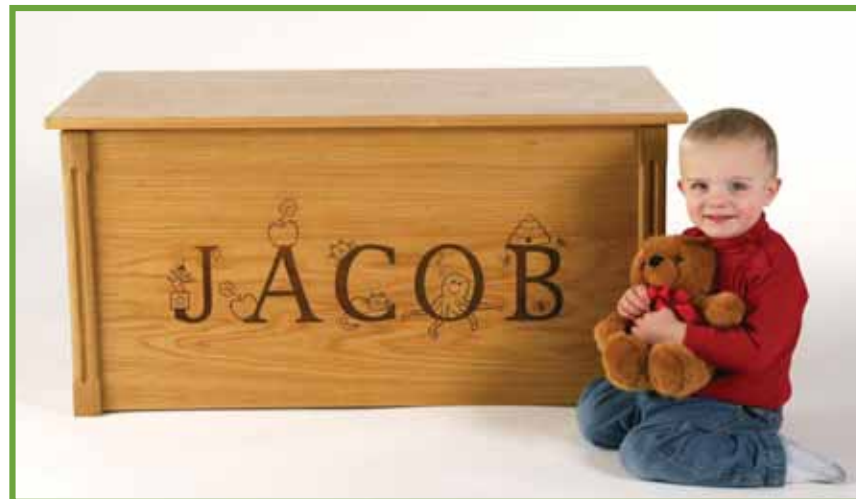
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Mike's Cafe - music

Red Lotus - candy cane reindeer

Round Table Pizza - balloons

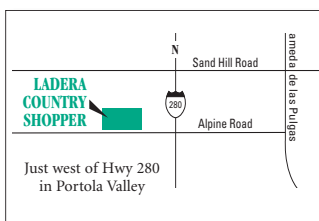
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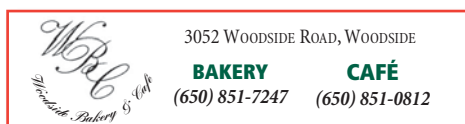
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HOLIDAY EVENTS

Community Events

Holiday Boutique at Sacred Heart

Nov. 30-Dec. 2, 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. Sacred Heart Prep, 150 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton. Call 322-1866. www.shschools.org/shp/

Kara Candlelight Service In memory of loved ones who have died. Interfaith Service of Remembrance includes music ends with a communal candle-lighting. Dec. 7, 7-8:30 p.m. Unity Palo Alto Community Church, 3391 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. www.kara-grief.org

Santa Arrives by Helicopter Dec. 2, 10 a.m. Christmas Carols by the community band and a chance to tell Santa your wish list. Sat., Dec. 2, 9:30 a.m.-noon. The helicopter arrival and Santa is free to the public. \$9 adult/\$6 youth admission to gallery. Hiller Aviation Museum, 601 Skyway Road, San Carlos. Call 654-0200. www.hiller.org

Concerts

California Bach Society Concert

Charpentier's Messe de Minuit pour Noel; traditional melodies by Buxtehude, Hassler, Praetorius, Scheidt and others. Holiday reception following. Dec. 2, 8 p.m. General \$25/senior \$18/student \$10. All Saints Episcopal Church, 555 Waverly St., Palo Alto. Call (415) 262-0272. www.calbach.org

Children's Christmas Concert

Featuring children's choirs, Bell Choir, and the adult Chancel Choir presenting choral songs and Christmas carols. Free admission. Childcare provided for ages 3-36 months. Dec. 3, 6 p.m. Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, 950 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park. Call 321-7136. www.mppc.org

Peninsula Symphony: A Holiday Celebration

The Peninsula Symphony and the Stanford Symphonic Chorus present a festival of music. Dvorak, Mass, Op. 86; Handel, excerpts from The Messiah. Dec. 1, 8 p.m.; Dec. 3, 1:30 p.m. \$20. Stanford Memorial Church, 450 Serra Mall, Palo Alto. www.peninsulasymphony.org

Dance

"The Nutcracker" Presented by Western Ballet. Featuring choreography by Gonzalo Espinoza, with students of the School of Western Ballet and guest artists Katherine Wells, Travis Walker, Ramon Moreno and Olivier Munoz. Dec. 8, 7 p.m.; Dec. 9-10, 1 and 6 p.m. Adults \$23/children/seniors \$18. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. Call 903-6000. www.mvcpa.com

Ballet America's "The Nutcracker"

Fri., Dec. 1, 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. Tickets available through ticketweb.com and the Fox box office 369-4119. \$16-\$37. Fox Theatre, 275A Linden St., Redwood City. Call 366-1222. www.americanballet.com

On Stage

"Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge"

A parody by satirist Christopher Durang. Wednesdays-Sundays, through Dec. 16, 8-10 p.m. \$22-\$32 Bus Barn Theater, 97 Hillview Ave., Los Altos. Call 941-0551. www.busbarn.org

Special Events

Farmhouse Christmas Tea Lunches

Nov. 30, Dec. 1-3 and Dec. 7-10, noon. A hot meal including appetizer, entree choice and Yuletide dessert with a Christmas Blend Tea. Guests age 12 and up. Reservations required. \$40 pre-paid. Yerba Buena Nursery, 19500 Skyline Blvd., Woodside. Call 851-1668. www.yerbabuenanursery.com

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**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

All views must include a home address and
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Viewpoint

Ideas, thoughts and opinions about local issues from people in our community. Edited by Tom Gibboney.

Atherton's lawsuit out of line

Let's hope the attitude behind a lawsuit filed by Atherton to stop construction of a new performing arts center at Menlo-Atherton High School will evaporate during an upcoming mediation session between the town and the Sequoia Union High School District, which operates M-A.

EDITORIAL*The opinion of The Almanac*

We can't imagine what Atherton's City Council members were thinking when they authorized the suit, which seeks

to force the district to conduct an environmental impact study for its new, \$26 million performing arts center at the school, located just inside the Atherton border. Concerns cited in the suit include rainwater runoff, traffic congestion and increased police calls.

The new center will be a tremendous asset to Atherton, Menlo Park and other nearby communities. With 350 to 500 seats, it is not the Hollywood Bowl, but it will be designed by the same architects and will accommodate performances produced by the school in a stunning auditorium considerably larger and more beautiful than any in the surrounding area. Menlo Park is to contribute \$2.6 million to the project in return for the right to use the theater for events that need performance space, such as theater classes and productions, concerts, recitals and children's shows.

One of the town's concerns, about increased water runoff caused by the theater during heavy rains, is a non-starter since the intersection at Ravenswood Avenue and Middlefield Road

has suffered from poor drainage for years, despite Atherton's best efforts to correct the problem.

A key Atherton demand is that Menlo Park seek a permit to change its pre-planned calendar of events at the theater, or to deviate from the pattern of use after the first year. Atherton claims its ordinance governing non-school uses of school facilities applies here, but state law seems to overrule it by requiring school boards — not towns — to oversee the use of school facilities by the community.

Atherton wants a gesture of respect, but it's got a funny way of asking for it. Atherton officials have known about the performing arts

center plans for months, and according to school district officials, have attended five or six meetings in an effort to resolve the issues. The town did not get what it wanted and chose to sue the district to gain leverage over use of a theater for which they paid nothing and that is entirely controlled by the school district.

School district officials have made good faith efforts to work with Atherton on its concerns, including sharing the cost of a traffic impact

study. A solution for rainwater runoff is also in the works.

As for the environmental impact report, the district seems on solid ground. School districts are permitted to skip environmental analysis unless certain criteria are exceeded, which is not the case with M-A's performing arts center.

It is a shame that the Atherton council allowed this NIMBY lawsuit to proceed. The town would have achieved much more by welcoming the theater, and working with the school district to resolve any impact problems.



The new performing arts center planned for Menlo-Atherton High School. Model and design by Hodgetts + Fung Architects of Culver City.

LETTERS*Our readers write*

Painful solution to dangerous intersection

Editor:

Once again problem of University and Menlo has raised its ugly head.

I will make the same suggestion I made several years ago, before the stop sign was moved. Instead of a stop sign, put up a "No Left Turn" sign. Will this be joyously accepted? Of course not.

Our problem is that we have to accommodate 2006 traffic on 1930 street layouts, which probably followed the paths of horse and buggy days or around someone's farm.

There will be anger because the traffic on Santa Cruz Avenue will increase. However, there are five cross streets between University Drive and El Camino Real that connect Santa Cruz to Menlo Avenue. And for those who forget there is no left turn on University at Menlo, it will require driving only two extra blocks, from Menlo to Live Oak and back to Menlo. If the intention



Menlo Park Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

This 1930 photo shows signs for new homes in the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park. Note that the price of a three-bedroom home was \$4,225 with a \$425 down payment and monthly payments of \$26. Housing sales in the area boomed after World War II, as they did all over the Peninsula.

is to head south at El Camino, there is a choice of six streets that connect University with El Camino.

Even before this is published I can hear the residents from those

other streets screaming "NIMBY." There are two other possibilities. One is to close the crosswalk at University and put another at the east end of the Draeger's parking

lot to cross Menlo. The other is to put up some kind of a No Left Turn light that is operated by the

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

person crossing Menlo.

Dan Goodman
Trinity Drive, Menlo Park

Unhappy with Atherton's suit against school district

Editor:

The following letter was addressed to Atherton Mayor Charles Marsala:

I was stunned and disappointed to read in the Almanac about the lawsuit the town of Atherton is bringing against the Sequoia Union High School District regarding the new performing arts center at Menlo-Atherton High School.

Our local public high school is an important resource in our community. More and more young families are moving into Atherton and are looking forward to sending their children to this very special school.

As you know, M-A is one of the most diverse high schools in California. It offers our community and its children a chance to be educated (socially as well as academically) in a unique setting which brings children of many socio-economic and cultural backgrounds together.

For years, most notably since Proposition 13, our public schools have struggled to provide the rich kind of education students thrive on.

The bond for the proposed performing arts center is an example of a positive move and was approved by voters. In hopes of providing a really usable facility, M-A has teamed up with the city of Menlo Park to share resources and usage. This seems to be a mutually beneficial arrangement and has been done in San Mateo and other school districts.

Please look at the larger picture here and consider the nearly 2,000 students enrolled each year at Menlo-Atherton. I'm certain that Atherton can work in a more positive way with the school and the district to provide the best outcome for our students.

Eileen Moran
Encino Road, Atherton

Anna Eshoo thanks constituents

Editor:

I am deeply grateful to you, the people of the 14th Congressional District, for your overwhelming support on Nov. 7.

It's an honor to represent you in Congress and I will continue to do everything I can to provide you, my constituents, with the representation you deserve and can be proud of.

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



Portola Valley Archives

Portola Valley School was about five years old in this 1960-'61 photo taken from Portola Road. The 1894 schoolhouse is virtually obscured by the oak tree in the center, but the 1909 historic schoolhouse building at right survives and today serves as the town's council chambers.

Valley school served students for 83 years

When the eighth-graders graduated from Portola Valley School in June 1977, it was the end of an 83-year era. For the first time since 1894, school would not be taking up in September on that site, now known as Portola Valley Town Center, 765 Portola Road.

The long history of schools on that property begins, strangely enough, with an attempt to capture all the waters from the San Francisco Creek watershed for San Francisco. Before 1894 the farm children from the rural area of Portola (as it was then known) trekked or rode their ponies to the Searsville School off Sand Hill Road. When the Spring Valley Water Works decided to build a dam and create a reservoir adjacent to the town of Searsville, the logging village had to move to make way. Thus, the school had to be abandoned.

Enter the famed inventor of the cable car, Andrew Hallidie. He owned Eagle Home Farm, 368 acres rising from Portola Road to the Skyline. He donated land for a new school that opened for business in the fall of 1894 at today's 765 Portola Road. Some 40 children from the Searsville School continued their studies there.

Their school was a charming, two-room structure with separate entrances for boys and girls. It had a small library in an alcove and a bell in a steeple to call the children to their studies. Today, that bell hangs from a wooden structure near the surviving historic schoolhouse.

By 1909, the student population was large enough — 53 — that a second school was needed. And so, the 22 voters (all men in those days) approved by a vote of 21-1 the immense sum of \$3,500 for a new building.

Architect LeBaron Olive designed the little schoolhouse that still stands on the site. A shed behind the buildings provided shelter for the ponies that brought the youngsters to school. Playground equipment stood between the two buildings.

In the teens, Portola was still so remote that finding a teacher was difficult. Commuting for some distance by horseback wasn't easy. So, the school board built a "teacherage" in the redwood grove. This little building provided a home for a teacher for many years.

That's how it was for the next 40 years — two little schoolhouses, standing side by side along Portola Road, providing education for all the students in the region. They also served as a community gathering place, with a huge bonfire, games and music at Halloween, a maypole dance and election of a queen on

■ PANEL OF CONTRIBUTORS



Nancy Lund is Portola Valley Town Historian and a member of the Almanac's Panel of Contributors.

May Day, and special gifts from community benefactors at Christmas.

When World War II ended in 1945, the population of Portola Valley, along with that of the entire Peninsula, burgeoned. These new residents faced a huge shortage of classrooms for their young children. In 1944, only 24 students were in attendance. In 1949 teachers welcomed 62 students.

The two little schoolhouses were no longer adequate. In 1948, a \$100,000 bond issue was approved by a vote of 119-2 for a modern four-room school — the wing that until recently housed the library. The 1894 school had to be razed to make space for the new school. The 1909 schoolhouse, no longer needed, was closed after 41 years of service. All seemed well for the immediate future.

However, in 1951 enrollment climbed to 149, almost doubling again in just two years. By 1953 it had jumped to 230! By 1957, enrollment had doubled again to 464, and it continued to rise. Fund raising votes became regular events. Still, buildings couldn't be built fast enough.

School officials used various strategies during these years to accommodate the students. The remaining old schoolhouse had been called back into service in 1951, after only a year of rest, and divided into two classrooms. Kindergartners and first-graders were on double sessions for a time. For a while, kindergartners met at Our Lady of the Wayside. Some older students had class in renovated fruit pickers' shacks and dormitories. The superintendent held parent conferences in his car. On election days one class, whose room was used as a polling place, met in the school bus. The band practiced outdoors. Assemblies were held in the redwood grove.

Meanwhile, revenue-raising elections passed by wide margins, and the building program continued at a rapid pace. A two-room wing was added in 1952; a three-room addition was completed in 1954. The last three sections, including the multi-use room, were completed by 1959.

To accommodate all the buildings, more land had been purchased in 1948 and still more in 1956. Until then, the Hallidie donation from 1894 had been sufficient. Corte Madera opened in 1957, Ormondale in 1961. The population stabilized, and at last every student had a regular classroom.

One significant revenue election had failed. In 1954, the state granted a loan to the district. Because of its controversial terms, the school board decided to poll the residents before accepting it. One of the requirements of the loan was the demolition of the remaining old school. A San Mateo County school official said, "I can't call those [rooms in the old school] classrooms. I think the district and the board have a moral obligation to house the children in a safe building." Despite this warning and the overcrowding, the voters refused the loan and saved the old school, 185 to 88.

A new issue arose in the early 1970s. When the school board learned of the danger presented by the San Andreas Fault, concern for the children's safety caused them to close the school. The town purchased it from the school district in 1975 for \$120,000. It was two years before the students left.

And for the next 30 years, the old buildings continued to serve the community as the Town Center — Town Hall, after-school classrooms, the library, the art gallery, the artists' studios, the playing fields. Finally, extensive geologic studies reported the immense risk that had been present all along, and the Town Council voted to raze the structures and re-build on safer ground.

The 1909 schoolhouse, truly a survivor, is just far enough away from the fault traces to be judged safe from being torn apart in the earthquake that will come one day. The Valley Presbyterian Church used it for services in 1957 and 1958. When Portola Valley was incorporated in 1964, it became the first Town Council Chambers. It has served as the office of the superintendent of schools and as the meeting place for the school board. For some 27 years, it was the Valley Art Gallery, housing the works of a consortium of local artists. Thanks to the generosity of over 400 residents, major repairs rescued it from the ravages of time, and in 1998, it became the Town Council Chambers.

And the plan to send San Francisco water to San Francisco that led to the creation of that first school? It never happened. The Spring Valley Water Works created the reservoir all right, but it began to silt up immediately, smelled bad, and was useless as drinking water.

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